OPINION

BY GHULAM SHABBIR

Faith and action

THE Quran repeatedly says that on the right side of history are those who attain faith *and* do constructive deeds. Hence, one can see that there is an umbilical connection between faith and action as both are integral and indispensable to each other. Being symbiotically related and organically conjoined, both live and die together. So, faith divorced from action is not faith at all, as per the Quran (6:158).

Actions are transitory in nature yet their effects assume permanence as action, rather than inner states or dispositions, affects the human self, tenaciously clinging to the rational soul. Upon death, a person's wealth and possessions go to his inheritors while his deeds are 'inherited' or passed on to God (19:80). So *men are not what they think or know but what they do.*

The early Islamic community was well aware of the inseparability of faith and action. They knew their duty lay in believing and in carrying out what they believed with sincerity of purpose. This sense of responsibility raised their behaviour from mechanical obedience to the law to a realm of moral activism, which turned their character into an epitome of transparency and excellence, where private and public life coalesced. The fusion of faith and action in their conduct and the resultant cumulative moral genius brought them to the fore of global affairs; shepherds and simple desert dwellers assumed the reins of history and reoriented the moral dimensions of the world.

However, later both internal and external challenges tore apart the union of faith and action. Kharjism's overinflated idealism put the existence and integrity of the state and community at risk while Murjism's overblown optimism paved the way for a laissez-faire morality and culminated in an Islamic replica of the Christian doctrine of justification by faith, ie, man is justified by faith apart from deeds.

Externally, Hellenism, the Hellenised Judaic-Christian tradition and an influx of other alien ideas distorted the very essence of the message.

Muslim philosophers and Sufis saw the Quran through the lens of Greek thought. With minor adaptations and adjustments, they became prisoners of Greek logic. Both concurred that the goal of human life is knowledge.

Philosophers accepted the idea of the eternity of the universe and said that indestructibility — the eternity of the objects of knowledge — bestowed 'immortality' on the subject. Al-Ghazali in his esoteric works admitted philosophical doctrines which he rejected in his works meant for the public. Speculative thought, mystic deliriums and subjective poetry substituted the scientific statements of the Quran, and the fusion of faith and action vanished into thin air.

It was Ibn Taimiyya who, using Quranic principles, balanced the extremes of Kharjism and Murjism, Asharism and Mutazila. He undertook the systematic refutation of Greek logic to purge Islam of alien imprints and revived the basic principles — the Quran and Sunnah.

The severity of his language and volume of his intellectual roar were equated with the plight and decadence of his community. He said the goal of human life is neither the philosophical contemplation of God nor the mystic type of love for Him, as God is not something to be merely perceived, admired and cherished.

The purpose of life is the knowledge of God's will and its implementation in life.

> Men are not what they think but what they do.

Man is the bearer of moral responsibility, which the entire creation had refused. It requires an all-out human endeavour to establish a relentless egalitarian world order. Thus, organic fusion rather than the mechanical juxtaposition of faith and action come alive in his scheme of thought, but his words went unheeded for centuries.

He found full expression in Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, who tested the verities of his statements through Sufi methods, in turn endorsing and enhancing the same. He is a lighthouse for the straying fleets of modern Islam.

As Dr Fazlur Rahman wrote, should any state or group in the Muslim world assume the project of reconstruction of Islamic thought, the thread would have to be resumed from where Ibn Taimiyya left off.

Pakistan is duty-bound to take on the enterprise of reconstruction of Islamic thought to distinguish normative Islam from historical faith, or else religious extremism, or secularism — the bane of modernity — will become the only choice.

The million-dollar question, however, is that when Kharjites and Mutazila have been an 'extinct species' for centuries, why do the 'chickens' of Murjism and Asharism still rule the roost? ■

The writer is an academic.

BY AASIM SAJJAD AKHTAR

Oil, rock, crypto

"The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: now is the time of monsters" — Antonio Gramsci

THE more things change, the more they stay the same. China may have emerged as a power of global import, but America is still the world's sheriff, and the Trump administration wants everyone to know that.

The dust had barely settled on the audacious kidnapping of Venezuelan president Nicol s Maduro that the Yankee propaganda machinery started fanning the flames of war on Iran. Imperialism abroad has been accompanied by Trump's unleashing of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) goons on American streets with orders to literally shoot 'suspects' at sight.

The combination of bravado and terror portends more darkness ahead. But what is the end game?

There isn't one. At a base level, Washington still just wants the oil, the lifeblood of the global capitalist order over which it has presided since the end of World War II. This order is creaking at the seams, but a better world system is not visible yet. Venezuela sits atop the biggest reserves of black gold in the world. Iran is number three on the list. US imperialism wants it all.

Then there is the other bedrock of the military-industrial complex — making war. In the face of China's inexorable economic rise and partial erosion of dollar hegemony, US power is not what it was. But Washington possesses 10 times the means of destruction of any other single country. It still bombs and invades other countries at will, kidnaps heads of state in broad daylight.

Will military might and oil stave off America's terminal economic decline? The answer depends on who monopolises the new global commodity on the block — critical minerals. Or maybe you prefer the term 'rare earth'. Whatever your fancy, control over the rock equates to monopolies of renewable energy, electric vehicles, everyday smart technology, high-grade weapons systems and so much more.

And this is where China calls out the Empire's bluff. Beijing's announcement of unprecedented export controls on rare earth elements a few months ago confirmed its willingness to play hard ball after Trump's dramatic tariff announcements earlier in 2025. Oil, gas, plastic and coal still matter, but critical minerals are starting to matter more. Capitalism is greening itself and the Empire is being forced to play catch up.

What does the tortured withering away of the old order mean for us in this country? Mostly business as usual, at least for now. The current hybrid plus regime is ingratiating itself with as many external patrons as possible to generate those coveted geostrategic rents. You want military personnel to serve in Gaza? Happy to consider it. A port in Pasni to rival the Chinese in Gwadar? Why not? Access to copper, gold and other mineral exploration projects in already conflict-ravaged Balochistan and KP? Ayub Khan spun it by claiming: friends, not masters.

All of this while Chinese solar panels flood Pakistani markets at breakneck speed, Chinese electric SUVs become the new status symbol of our hedonistic chattering classes, and all manner of defence deals are signed with Gulf kingdoms and whatnot. No one seems to be concerned with the geopolitical wars that will surely intensify.

Which brings us to crypto. Earlier this week, the CEO of the shady Trump-owned crypto company World Liberty Finance was in town to ink a deal with the government. The big guns were all present to oversee the 'historic' agreement. What exactly does it mean to 'explore innovation in digital finance'? No one really knows, just as no one is privy to what the newly created Pakistan Virtual Asset Regulatory Authority is actually doing, on whose watch and to what end.

> The combination of bravado and terror portends more darkness.

The crypto game is arguably even more opaque than any other money-making enterprise in the country, and that is saying a lot. More than $600 million was lost to crypto transactions in 2025. The one thing that can be said for certain is that World Liberty Finance has brought in a lot of cash for the Trump family, especially since he became president, and that there is more on the horizon for a select few in both Pakistan and the US in the wake of this deal.

And herein lies the rub. For all the geopolitical change taking place around the world, the logic of the system at large remains the accumulation of power and profit. As bloody games around oil, minerals and crypto intensify, brutalised masses in Pakistan and beyond are in line for even more of the brunt of a rapid race to the bottom. ■

The writer teaches at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

FROM THE PAST PAGES OF DAWN

1976 | Fifty years ago

Civil war in Lebanon

BEIRUT: There was no end in sight today [Jan 15] of the murderous fighting in Beirut and other parts of Lebanon, with offensives and counter-offensives by Left and Right-wing combatants causing more destruction... . Nasserist irregulars have reconquered several hotel ruins in the city centre and were also occupying the office of the Prime Minister... . ... Christian militias succeeded in recapturing the two strategic bridges, linking the city centre with the northern parts of Beirut. Right-wing militias were also occupying the Palestinian camp of Dbaye and … besieged two other camps. — News agencies

[Meanwhile, according to news agencies from Islamabad,] The survey and inspection wings of the Central Board of Revenue have swung into action all over the country to tighten the ring around tax dodgers, it was officially stated here today [Jan 15]. … It has been decided to conduct the survey operation on emergency and planned basis. … The first to be thoroughly covered by the survey are all owners of private and commercial vehicles … all owners of houses and flats … all contractors of goods and services and all private telephone subscribers.

1951 | Seventy-five years ago

Freeing the Kashmiris

KARACHI: The demand that Pakistan should quit the Commonwealth if it fails to assist in the solution of the Kashmir issue has been made by a joint meeting of the Anjuman Pukhtoon Karachi and leading tribal Maliks of the NWFP held in the Federal Capital on Monday [Jan 15].

The meeting said that though the tribesmen had no hope of justice from the Commonwealth, they supported the participation of the Prime Minister, Mr Liaquat Ali Khan, in the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference as a formality. But if no fruitful result is borne … it urged for the withdrawal of Pakistan from the Commonwealth.

The meeting assured … Liaquat … that he could ... count upon the eight crores of Pakistanis for the liberation of Kashmir, particularly the 70 lakh Pathans who have taken a vow to liberate the 30 lakhs of Kashmiri Muslims from the Dogra Raj. The tribal leaders announced that the ... Pathans were restraining their passion for the liberation of Kashmir ... because of Pakistan's international obligations, but "their patience was now exhausted" and no one could say when they would ... raise the war cry of Jehad and fall upon the enemies of Kashmir and Pakistan. — News agencies

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Letters may be edited for purposes of clarity and space. All letters should carry the writer's address, CNIC and phone numbers.

New world order is actually quite old

THE demons in the shape of 'superpower' have been lurking behind smaller nations for long. But this new world order did not start all of a sudden. It was installed step by step. After World War II, the world was not just being rebuilt. It was being 'reconstructed' by the same Zionist powers that profited from the war. They did not want peace. They wanted through wars permanent control over everything — resources, money, energy and, above all, power.

The United Nations became the 'global referee' in 1945, but a toothless one. The West, led by the United States, keeps talking about peace and humanity, but sends troops anywhere in the world for oil. From Iraq to Venezuela, it is the same story. The only time the West chooses to keep its silence are occasions when there is a genocide going on somewhere, especially in the Middle East.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank were born right after World War II. Debt became a weapon. They did not colonise countries with armies anymore. They did not have to. They used loans, instead. Nations became clients. The IMF does not help poor countries. It traps them in debt, and then forces them to sell resources, land and sovereignty. The World Bank does the same. It colonises client nations economically with contracts instead of armies.

The next in line happens to be the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). It was not meant to just gather intelligence, but to interfere in other nations' affairs, infiltrate and overthrow governments considered not submissive enough. CIA is believed to have has overthrown more than 80 governments since its inception. It funds rebels and armed terrorists, and installs puppet regimes. It has run drug cartels, sold weapons and spread propaganda; all this in the name of democracy.

In 1948, Israel was created — funded by Rothschilds money, backed by the Great Britain and shielded by American soldiers. This was done by committing a genocide of Palestinians. A year later, Israel formed Mossad, the intelligence agency with a reach far beyond its size. Mossad joined CIA as a regime-change mechanism.

They overthrew leaders, funded terror and silenced dissent. It was in the same year that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) was established as a military alliance with no borders, acting as the global police. In time, Nato decided what is a 'just war'. It funded one side and bombed the other, calling it 'intervention'.

These are different tools from the same toolbox. These are different names of the same mechanism. It is not a coincidence that these institutions came one after another. It was a system built after World War II to control nations through intelligence, finance and military might. So, who actually won World War II? It was not the US. It was not Europe. If you want to know who won, find out who you cannot criticise without getting labelled as anti-Semitic.

Name withheld on request
Gujranwala

Endangered species

EVERY winter, when icy winds sweep across Central Asia, thousands of migratory birds, especially houbara bustard, fly towards the warm landscapes of Pakistan. From the lakes of Sindh to the wetlands of Punjab and the coastal belt of Balochistan, these travellers bring life, colour and ecological balance. Yet, despite their beauty and importance, many of them never complete their journey because they are hunted, trapped, or driven away from their natural resting places. The hunting of migratory birds is not only a loss for wildlife, it is a loss for Pakistan's environment, identity and future.

Migratory birds are essential for our ecosystem, and their presence is a sign of environmental health. They help in pollination, seed dispersal, and the natural control of pests, which benefits agriculture, forests, and even human settlements. When these birds arrive in Pakistan, they revitalise our wetlands, enrich biodiversity, and support the natural rhythms of life.

However, when they are hunted in large numbers, these natural processes weaken, and the entire ecological chain becomes unstable. The disappearance of migrating birds is a warning that our environment is suffering, and that urgent action is needed.

In many regions of Pakistan, particularly in the Indus Delta, the Kirthar Range and the lakes surrounding Thatta, Badin and Larkana, illegal hunting has unfortunately turned into a routine activity. Rare and endangered birds, such as the houbara bustard, cranes, ducks and falcons, are hunted for sport, display or illegal trade. This reckless hunting not only decreases their population, but also damages Pakistan's international reputation, and violates global commitments on wildlife protection. While traditions and customs are sincerely respected, no tradition can ever justify causing harm to nature and destruction of species that belong to the world.

Habitat destruction is another major threat faced by these migratory birds. Rapid urbanisation, pollution of rivers, cutting of forests, and the drying of wetlands leave the birds with fewer safe places to rest. When wetlands shrink due to unplanned development, and when water bodies become polluted with industrial waste, migratory birds become weak and vulnerable. Nature belongs to all of us, and all of us must protect it.

Sajjad Hussain Cheehani
Agra, Sindh

Efficacy of medicines

AN old article — "When the cancer drugs don't work" (June 26) — continues to haunt me even today after so many months. It was based on investigative work by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, revealing that essential chemotherapy drugs used for treating breast cancer, leukaemia and other severe illnesses, are being sold with inaccurate quantities of their key ingredients. These substandard cancer drugs are being shipped to over a hundred countries, including Pakistan. As a cancer patient, I am deeply concerned.

Patients like me rely on these medications during some of the most challenging times of their lives, with the belief that they are both effective and safe. Sadly, learning that certain cancer drugs may contain inconsistent dosages of their active ingredients — either too little or too much — is deeply alarming.

In Pakistan, there is no reliable way to verify if prescribed medicines meet quality standards. We place our trust in the healthcare system to protect us, but that trust faces setbacks in an already fragile environment when quality control mechanisms fail. How can doctors manage critical conditions if the doses are inconsistent? If the quality of medicine is compromised, what hope is there for recovery? Low-cost generic alternatives to the expensive originals cannot always be relied upon, but how can a pharmaceutical company at all manufacture and distribute a drug that is still under patent protection? This is a serious violation of intellectual property rights, as well as a significant threat to patient safety, since the copied formulations may lack critical testing and verification reletaed to efficacy and safety.

The Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (Drap) and the national Intellectual Property Organisation (IPO) are under obligation to investigate these issues thoroughly. Patients deserve reassurance that the medicines they consume meet regulatory standards. Drap must diligently strengthen its quality control mechanisms, and test all generic drugs with vigilance. It is a matter of life and death for us, the patients.

The health authorities must thoroughly test cancer drugs, hold manufacturers and suppliers accountable, and strengthen oversight. Ensuring that patients receive quality treatment is vital. Cancer is merciless as it is, and suffering patients deserve to have a fair chance of treatment.

Abu Bakar Kareem
Karachi

University harassment

A SHAMEFUL incident took place at the Burewala sub-campus of the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad. A video circulating on social media shows a female student requesting for just two grace marks from her teacher, something many students commonly ask for. Instead of behaving professionally, the teacher gives unethical and unacceptable signals to her. What should have been a simple academic discussion turned into a disturbing and humiliating experience for the student.

Institutions are responsible for protecting the students from harassment and misuse of authority. The accused should be punished as per the relevant law, and the university administration must take serious and immediate steps to prevent such incidents.

Another important point is that the marking system should not be in the hands of class teachers. In many developed and well-structured education systems, marks are kept confidential, and examination papers are evaluated by an independent third party. This ensures transparency, and reduces the chances of any teacher using grades as a tool for exploitation. Our universities should adopt the same practice. We should stand with students who raise their voice against harassment, and should never question their choices. Only by demanding strict and exemplary punishment can we make campuses safe, giving our girls the confidence they need in life.

Zeeshan Soomro
Larkana

▶ **WRONG ESTIMATE:** This is with reference to the report 'Mayor inaugurates Rs900m solar-powered street light project on Sharea Faisal' (Jan 5), which quoted the Karachi mayor as saying that the project would "save Rs25m in electricity bills" every year. I do not know whether to laugh or cry. A simple calculation (900 divided by 25) shows that the payback period for this project is 36 years. Ask anyone who knows the subject, and you will be told that the payback period should be of five years. The city mayor either does not know what he is talking about or someone has minted a lot of money.
Shakir Lakhani
Karachi

▶ **CULTURE OF BRIBERY:** Recently, I was travelling from Jacobabad to Karachi on a local transport late at night. Due to heavy traffic, the movement on the road was slow. The bus driver took a shortcut and was soon stopped by four police officials. After a few minutes of argument, he handed over Rs200 to one of them. Without issuing a challan, recording any violation, or following legal procedure, the policemen allowed the bus to continue its journey. Indeed, this incident is not an exception, it reflects a normalised culture of bribery on Pakistan's roads.
Maria Khoso
Jacobabad

▶ **ROAD CLOSURE:** Whenever cricket matches take place at the cricket stadium in Rawalpindi, all surrounding areas are completely blocked by the relevant authorities for security arrangements. These road closures cause immense inconvenience to the general public. The twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad are connected through key routes, such as Faizabad, and when these crucial roads are blocked, people are unable to travel for work, education, medical emergencies, or other daily necessities. All they face are hours-long traffic jams, frustration and unending helplessness. The authorities should consider alternative arrangements, such as improved traffic management plans, alternative routes, or selecting venues that do not disrupt major roads.
Maham Imran
Islamabad

External Ombudsman

Veteran journalist Muhammad Ali Siddiqi is *Dawn's* External Ombudsman (DEO). His duty is to attend to our readers' complaints, and to respond to them professionally. DEO is the investigating authority to whom all complaints can be referred, and it is DEO who takes notice of any alleged violations of *Dawn's* code of ethics, and informs the Editor for appropriate action.
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